

CARL SCHURZ'S POLITICAL CAREER

nomination and re-election of Grant in 1872. The celebrated

Ku Klux Act became law on the 20th of April, 1871. It not

only gave the federal courts extensive jurisdiction for the pun-

ishment of the outrages, but also authorized the President to

declare in rebellion regions infested by the Ku Klux, and to

suspend the *habeas corpus* and suppress the disorders by

military force. Substantially, this expressed the theory that

the South was again, as it had been in 1861, in insurrection

against the authority of the national government. The wide-

spread Ku Klux organization was, the radicals asserted, a

revival of the great rebellion, and the Republican party, under

the man who had crushed the rebels in the open field, must see

to it that they should not triumph by secret conspiracy.

Schurz vigorously opposed this legislation.

His reasoning was the same as on the less drastic bills of a year

earlier (above, p. 320). He believed the numbers of the Ku Klux

to be grossly exaggerated and their purpose to be grossly

distorted. The outrages ascribed to the mysterious order were,

he said, no new thing, but merely expressions, less numerous and

less shocking than just after the surrender in 1865, of the

general unsettle-ment due to the social revolution in the South.

The bad govern-ment of reconstruction had aggravated the evils

and postponed their abolition; but time would bring the return of

order. There was nothing in the situation to warrant the

proposed legisla-

tion, with its excessive centralization, its ruthless
overriding of
the rights of the States and its " new doctrine of
constructive
rebellion—the first step toward a doctrine of
constructive
treason."

To the sharp and insistent demand of those
who pressed
the measure, that it be a test of fealty to the
Republican party,
Mr. Schurz took pains to give an unmistakable
reply:—" I
stand in the Republican party as an
independent man." He